



**Written Testimony of Representative Garey Bies
Assembly Committee on Public Health
Assembly Bill 154 – Providing Tobacco Products to Minors**

Good afternoon Chairman Benedict, Committee members. I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of Assembly Bill 154, relating to providing tobacco products to minors. I will be brief.

Assembly Bill 154 is a very simple bill and was first brought to my attention by an assistant district attorney from my district. This bill aims to close a loophole in Wisconsin law as it pertains to providing tobacco products to minors.

Currently, it is against the law to purchase cigarettes and provide those cigarettes to minors. However, this prohibition does not extend to other tobacco products. Assembly Bill 154 very simply extends this prohibition to cover other tobacco products.

While this legislation may be simple, its importance should not be underestimated. We are all familiar with the health hazards associated with smoking, but other types of tobacco products are not safe alternatives to cigarettes. As the cost of a pack of cigarettes rises ever higher, it is important that our youth do not turn to other tobacco products. Current law enables our youth to obtain tobacco products. Assembly Bill 154 will close a loophole in state law to make it more difficult for minors to obtain tobacco products.

I hope that you will support Assembly Bill 154 both in Committee and throughout the legislative process.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have. Thank you.

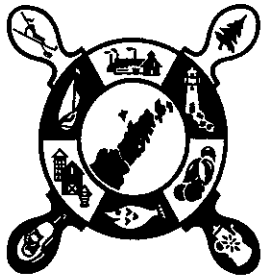
First for Wisconsin!

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May 5, 2009

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RE: AB-154; Prohibiting Purchase of Tobacco Products

Dear Representative Bies:

I am unable to attend the Public Hearing on AB-154 because of my office work schedule/load, however, I wanted to say just a few words in support of the legislation.

My interest in the purchase/provision of tobacco products to minors was peaked when our local School Liaison Deputy contacted me last year regarding a local high school teacher that was alleged to have procured tobacco products (chewing tobacco) for a number of students. To my amazement and chagrin, the procurement of tobacco products for minors only applied to cigarettes.

It is my belief that the use of tobacco products, **not** including cigarettes, is growing. Minors are unable to purchase loose tobacco themselves and so must procure it through others. The proposed legislation would eliminate the loophole that allows others to provide tobacco products to minors.

While it is generally known and accepted that cigarettes are a health hazard, so are other forms of tobacco. Chewing tobacco is a known carcinogen, especially cancers of the mouth. Further, loose tobacco is often mixed with illegal substances such as marijuana and cocaine for consumption.

This proposed legislation correctly imposes penalties upon those who would provide any tobacco product to a minor and I would strongly recommend passage of the amendment.

Thank you,

Joan M. Korb
Assistant District Attorney

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